

LANCE ARMSTRONG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the news reports: 80-year-old woman gives birth to 300-pound baby; bat child found in Utah cave; Lance Armstrong used performance-enhancing drugs.

Mr. Speaker, these are a few tabloid headlines that have been released recently. They seem a bit outrageous to normal people, especially the last one. As a fellow Texan and great admirer of Lance Armstrong, I stand with him in the face of this mindless, babbling slander.

Using unknown procedures and almost none of the standards outlined by the World Anti-Doping Agency, a newspaper pretends to have proof that in 1999, six years ago no less, Lance Armstrong used a performance-enhancing drug. What a shock, the newspaper is a French one.

This most recent saga is a continuation of an ongoing struggle between Lance Armstrong and the French press. Since 1999 when Lance won the first of his seven consecutive Tour de France races, the French press has accused him of using drugs. The French would line the streets as Lance raced by. They would spit on him and curse and chant, "Dope, dope."

Lance Armstrong's past is fairly well-known. In 1996, Lance Armstrong was diagnosed with testicular cancer, and the condition spread to his abdomen, his lungs and his brain. He was given about a 33 percent chance of living. With the help of modern medicine, the good Lord and an iron will, Lance Armstrong beat cancer, went on to race again, and became arguably the best cyclist in history.

But, Mr. Speaker, the anti-American French press cannot handle this truth so they attack the victor. Once again, they try and project their arrogance and obsessed outlandish sentiment against one of cycling's best.

□ 1815

Cycling in France is like baseball or football is in the United States, and they cannot comprehend how an American, a Texan no less, could dominate their sport.

The most important aspect of Armstrong's success is his ability to train longer and harder than any other man alive. In the words of one racing expert, "Lance pushed physical preparations to new limits." In his book, Lance attributes his training abilities to the fact that he learned how to endure pain during his battle with cancer.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of a perfect athlete is similar to the idea of a perfect storm. You take the most gifted athlete, his ability to combine that with the most dedicated work ethic, and what you have is Lance Armstrong. You see, Lance wants it more than anyone else.

Seven Tour de France crowns and a million dumbfounded French reporters later what you get is this situation today. We have a tremendous athlete falling victim to the accusations of reporters with an obvious case of sour grapes and elitist European snobbery.

Mr. Speaker, I was a felony court judge in Texas for 20 years and a prosecutor for 8. I never lost a jury trial as a prosecutor, so I know what it takes to convict someone. I know about the chain of evidence and due process. And nothing about the most recent of the French allegations against Lance Armstrong is credible. Not a court in the United States or even France would convict him of these atrocious and appalling allegations.

There have been many drug tests done on Lance Armstrong over the years, and all of a sudden, years later, as if out of some obscure cave, a French newspaper reports some old samples from a French lab came back positive. Mr. Speaker, that dog just won't hunt.

Essentially, there is no proof that these mysterious samples used in this test were even Lance Armstrong's. There is no proof they were stored properly and there is no proof the test is even reliable. The chain of evidence is so horrible that nobody can prove that the samples were not switched.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is simply the latest bombardment of the 7-year smear campaign by the French media. They cannot defeat Lance Armstrong in their race, so they are attempting to bring him down with allegations and junk tabloid journalism. If this latest so-called proof is the best the French can do, I suggest they do what they do best: throw up their hands and surrender. The burden of proof is on the accuser, not the accused, and I would encourage this tabloid to put out the campfire and call in the dogs, because the hunt is over.

Mr. Speaker, what the French need to remember is that Lance Armstrong's life stands for much more than his amazing cycling abilities and winning seven races. He knows there is more to life than the 15,205 miles he cycled in those seven races. Although the Tour de France is known as the world's most grueling test of human endurance, fighting cancer and going on to win the test of life is more remarkable.

As a superior athlete, he has succeeded in inspiring cancer patients around the globe and will continue his fight for years to come, despite absurd accusations as this one. Perhaps Lance Armstrong has the best answer to these absolute absurd allegations. In a 2000 Nike commercial that he produced he made the statement, "Everybody wants to know what I'm on. What I'm on: I'm on a bike busting my butt 6 hours a day. What are you on?"

KATRINA RESPONSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in the past week all Americans, in fact, the whole world, has witnessed the devastation along our gulf coast. As a nation and as a Congress there are three ways to respond to this crisis: rebuilding, restoring, and retrospection.

We must pinpoint the errors made prior to the storm and the flooding; develop an action plan on what needs to be done, ensuring these times of failures do not happen again to Americans; and focus on rebuilding the lives. And we will rebuild those lives. As many tomorrows as those folks along the coast need, every American will dedicate themselves to being there as they regather their lives, regather their loved ones, and regather their property. We will be there every step of the way. That is the most important message they need to know.

Before we do anything, we need to dispense with the myths that we were not warned. Earlier this year, the New Orleans Times-Picayune ran a series of articles on the possibility of a Category 5 hurricane and what would happen to New Orleans.

In December 2004, the Army Corps issued a report saying the levees needed to be raised. According to Newsweek, Senator Breaux from Louisiana personally discussed this issue with the President last year. So let us not kid ourselves. The warnings were there about where the weaknesses existed.

Now, that is as it relates to the hurricane. We also have articles relating to, and reports just yesterday in the Wall Street Journal about, how, in fact, FEMA directors around the country reported up to the head of Homeland Security that, in fact, the way we were structured we could not handle a major crisis in the country, leading to a meeting in August with Director Chertoff because everybody was upset about what was happening to FEMA and the degradation of the operation.

We need to be honest with the American people. They ultimately pay for this government. They need to know, and that is not going to be about pointing fingers or about blaming anybody, because you cannot fix a problem if you do not think you have a problem. And there are a lot of individual actions where people can be proud of people who have served, volunteered, or who have done heroic things beyond the call of duty. That is all good and that is the right thing and that needs to be supported.

But we need to be honest with ourselves, and that does not mean pointing fingers for political gain. If FEMA was not up to snuff, it was not up to snuff. If the director of Homeland Security did not take the type of hands-on approach that was needed and people were concerned internally, we need to deal with that.

Here we had a natural crisis. The Wall Street Journal noted the other